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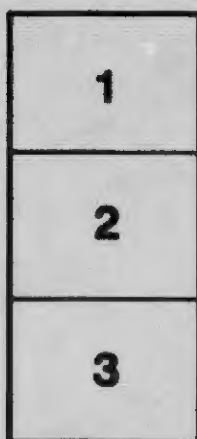
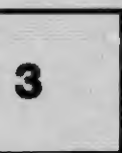
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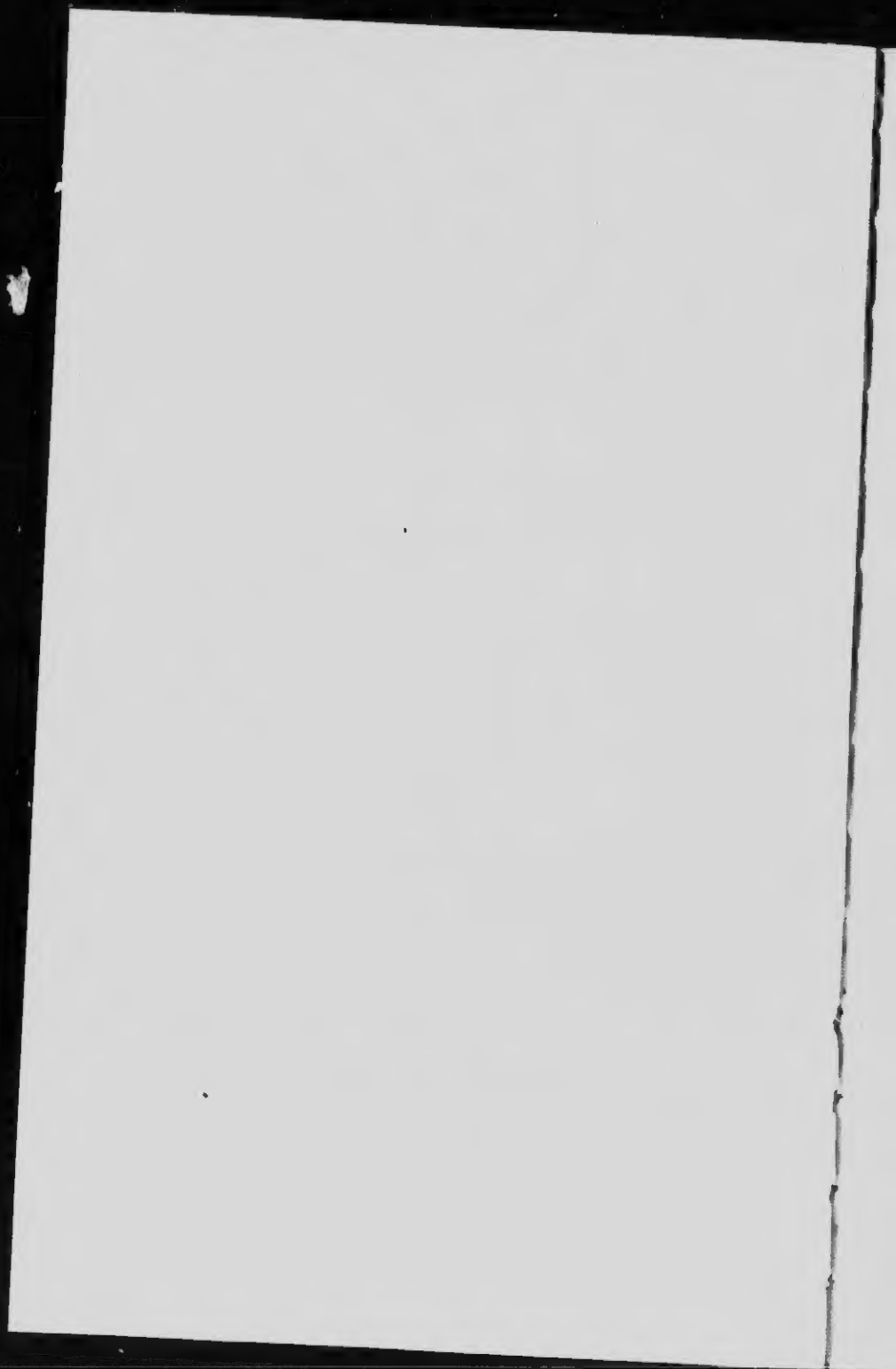
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Notes
On an Exhibition
of some
Old Masterpieces
at
Laval University

THAT HAVE LATELY BEEN
RESTORED BY

J. PURVES CARTER

Including the Two Celebrated Altar
Pictures that were Seriously
Damaged by Fire in the
Seminary Chapel.

EXHIBITION OPEN
JUNE 10th, To 18th INCLUSIVE



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Notes on an Exhibition of some Old Masterpieces

By G. M. FAIRCHILD, Jr.

The authorities of the Quebec Seminary and Laval University will hold an exhibition from the 10th to the 18th of June of a number of important paintings by some of the greatest of the old masters. These pictures have been recently restored by the well known English expert, J. Purves Carter. While these paintings are but a few among the many gems in the Laval collection they are fairly representative of the whole, for the University possesses a most important and priceless series of examples of some of the most renowned names in art. The pictures, as a rule, are sadly in need of the restorer's work, and all of them require appropriate framing. The authorities are fully alive to the urgent necessity of the case, but they are handicapped for want of funds. It is not alone regrettable that such a collection should be neglected, it is almost a crime, for many of these pictures represent a king's ransom in money value. It was only a few weeks ago that the Duke of Norfolk disposed of

a painting by Holbein for the sum of \$330,000, and it is not improbable that the National Gallery will acquire it. King Leopold of Belgium has just sold a Van Dyke for \$30,000 and is negotiating the sale of a Rubens for \$200,000. The sums paid to-day for the genuine works of the masters show their ever increasing value. A painting by Franz Hals, "A Family Group" which was lately sold to the National Gallery for \$125,000, was purchased by the vendor's predecessors for the sum of \$200 at a sale at Christie's in London. It must not be forgotten, however, that the value of even an old master is largely dependent upon its condition. The accumulated dirt and old varnish of centuries, and a cracked and blistered surface add no value to a picture in the eyes of a connoisseur or buyer. In the great European collections the restorer is ever present with watchful eye and loving care for the safety and well preservation of his charges. The climate of Canada with its severe changes is particularly trying to paintings and ceaseless vigilance must be exercised to prevent rapid deterioration. Mr. Carter, who has a full page illustrated article in the "New York World" of the 23rd on the masterpieces in the New York Historical Society's collection emphasizes the danger of neglect to care for old paintings. In the same article he calls attention to a priceless Guido Reni among the Laval pictures.

Some descriptions of the pictures to be specially exhibited at Laval University on the 10th of June may be of interest.

One of the most, if not the most, treasured and precious belonging of the Quebec Seminary is the celebrated altar piece representing the "Holy Family," (The Repose in Egypt). The history of this sacred work is exceedingly interesting, and it is particularly dear to the Seminary because it was, that when the war with France and England resulted in the cession of Canada to the British, "Les Missions etrangeres de Paris" had this beautiful work painted expressly for the Quebec Seminary and sent over to Quebec as a token of their undying love and devotion during their brethren's time of trial to show that they had not forgotten them. The great painter Van Loo, then the most celebrated painter in France was engaged to paint the picture. It represents the "Repose in Egypt of the Holy Family," a remarkable composition of wonderful beauty. Van Loo studied in Italy and upon his return to France was made President of the Academy and was regarded as the head of the profession, besides, he enjoyed the distinction of royal patronage. Upon its arrival in Quebec this splendid work became the masterpiece of the Seminary Chapel where it remained until the disastrous fire which destroyed that sacred edifice some eighteen years ago when fourteen priceless paintings were burned excepting two, namely, this famous altar-piece and another very beautiful work of great value and representing "The Vision of Saint Anthony," painted by Parrocel. Both of these were badly burned and blistered, and so discolored as to be almost totally unrecognizable. The altar-piece by Van

Loos was also badly torn and had a large hole burned in it. Both these paintings were thought to be irreparably damaged, but when Mr. Purves Carter was here last spring preparing the new catalogue, he was asked if anything possible could be done to save these historical works. After examining them he expressed the opinion that it would be possible to restore them, badly as they were damaged. The University authorities expressed their great desire to rescue these works from their dilapidated condition, and oblivion and at the first opportunity the artist repaired to Quebec to make good his word and to carry out the difficult task.

The great trouble that confronted him was the charred condition of the paintings, (especially that of the Holy Family), which made it utterly impossible to move them with the hands for relining them on a new canvas, which was the only possible way to save them. The first thing to be done was to take off inch by inch the old back lining which had been put on before the painting left France. This ultimately accomplished, and the large hole bridged, the question now was how to move the picture, in its charred condition, to place it on the new canvas. The difficulty was overcome by the artist making two canvas frames of the same size and getting the picture between them sandwich-like, so that it could be turned up and down. When the new canvas was ready with a wet preparation spread upon it, which was to fasten the back of the altar-piece, it could then be slid off the large stretching frame onto the

new canvas without touching it with the hands, and afterwards pressed with heavy hot irons and made perfectly flat and smooth and ready for the next step in its restoration, which was the cleaning of it. When this was reached a new difficulty arose as the painting had accumulated the smoke and grease from the altar candles of over a hundred and fifty years. This had been varnished from time to time and was now baked by the intense heat from the fire, and formed a thick dense layer of black bituminous matter which entirely concealed the painting. To remove this it required continually dampening with preparations, and careful scraping—the scrapings resembling so much pitch. Gradually the beautiful work began to come to life again and with patient and watchful labor all the colors were brought out in their pristine charm, so that at last, after great and ceaseless toil, the painting has assumed, as near as age will permit, its original state, and truly a work of the very greatest beauty and poetry—The composition is magnificent. The group of the "Sainte Famille" is entirely lighted by the light emanating from the Divine Child Jesus as he reposes in ecstasy on the arm of the Blessed Virgin and receives the light of the Holy Spirit and the Eternal Father and the Angelic Host.

The second painting that was miraculously saved from the fire was that of the "Vision of St. Anthony," by the celebrated French artist, Pierre Parrocel. This painter was born in 1664 and died in 1739. He was the nephew of Joseph and son of Louis Parrocel, and was born

at Avignon and died at Paris. He was first instructed by his uncle and afterwards entered the school of Carlo Maratta at Rome and became a member of the Academy there. The infant Jesus and the Blessed Virgin are represented appearing to the saint who is kneeling amidst a beautiful landscape. The figures are life size. Two angels hover above. The Infant Jesus clasps the saint around the neck with his arms. This painting was practically invisible and badly blistered before its restoration, and when it was relined and about to be cleaned, it was found to have been, at some period, totally repainted with gross red paint which had to be removed to get at the original. When this was done in the presence of Monsieur Laflamme, the original painting in all its most superb beauty came to light as perfect and fine as when first painted, but still needing, of course, some very careful work in restoring the damaged portions. When the two foregoing paintings are framed, and after their exhibition they will be finally installed in the Seminary Chapel, where it is hoped they will be secure and preserved for an indefinite future.

Among other extremely rare and valuable works lately discovered at the Laval University, and which are being restored by Mr. Purves Carter, is a superb work painted on copper and representing "The Purification." It is painted by the celebrated Italian Master, Guido Reni. In his earlier life he painted his most precious works often upon this metal and many of these are his very choicest as they are the most prized. The sub-

ject is represented in a composition of many figures in the centre of which seated upon a dais, the Blessed Virgin nurses the Divine Infant. She is surrounded by St. Elizabeth, St. Anne, St. Simeon, St. Joseph and other saints and high priests. In the background is a temple and architectural buildings. The colouring is wonderfully pure and fine and well preserved, although the work had blistered greatly and required careful treatment. The well known painting of the "Coronation of the Blessed Virgin," in the British National Gallery in London is of the same period of this Masters' work.

But what will prove a great attraction to the general public and artists alike, is the wonderful work which has lately been discovered representing Our Lord calling St. Peter who leaves a boat in which he was fishing and hurries through the water to the shores at the command of the Master.

It is an important work of large dimensions and it is painted in the finest style by that romantic and tragic master, Salvator Rosa, and is the most important of several the University is fortunate in possessing. It had suffered by the water during the fire which took place some years ago in the roof of the Seminary, and was badly blistered. The difficult process of relining on new canvas has renewed the lease of its life for an indefinite future, and the cleaning and repairing has revealed its wonderful beauties and magnificent colouring which dirt and discoloured varnish has hidden for many years until only its ghost could be seen.

The superb "Ecce Homo"—a work of sublime pathos, rendered with the most consummate skill the painters' art is capable of, is painted on a very old Italian canvas. It is over 400 years old, and must be either the original project for the great fresco at Sarrano, near Milan, or a subsequent version by the great artist Luini of the same project. A similar work, only larger, was in the famous Henry Doetsch collection, London.

A very fine 'paneau' representing Spring in the form of a beautiful maiden seated amid flowers in a landscape and holding between her hands a wreath of flowers. Cupid hovers above her and showers flowers upon her. This is one of the rare works lately discovered and is painted by the famous French court painter, Francois Boucher—who painted the Court of Louis XV. and also the famous Madame de Pompadour. The Laval collection contains several portraits of the Royal Family of France by this artist.

A very remarkable and rare work of "Still Life" by William Kalf, and representing a charming composition upon a beautifully draped table with a rich green cloth, on which rests a delf dish fruit and a silver platter over which falls a rose, behind are superb repousse gold vases, and Venetian glasses. The painting is the very quintessence of the Master's art. To show how rare this masters works are, not even the National Gallery of London or the Louvre at Paris contain a single example. This work is signed——.

The charming work on panel representing the "Blessed Virgin and Infant

Saviour with the Infant Saint John" was so black that it was referred to as the "Coloured Madonna." Now it is cleaned and its great beauties brought to light, its fine qualities may be enjoyed by the student of art. It has been identified as an original work by Andrea Schiavone, the artist whom Titian himself rescued from obscurity. The work is very rich in colouring and betrays the best traditions of the great Venetian school.

A work of the greatest interest is that representing "The Fruit Garland" and identified as the original project by the great painter, Sir Peter Paul Rubens. In the process of relining this work recently, Mr. Carter found painted on the back of the original canvas, the date 1614. The larger work executed by pupils and touched by Rubens afterwards is in the Munich Gallery, was painted in the year 1618. Mr. Carter declares that there is no question of doubt that the Laval picture is the original by Rubens own hand, as the work itself bears full testimony to as well as the canvas being the same as the artist habitually used and the same as Mr. Carter has found other genuine works painted upon. It was recently discovered among a number of other rare works which had been forgotten for years stowed away in a lumber room. Most curious too is another fine work. It is the original portrait of Mrs. Sarah Seddons, the great actress and it is painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence. The learned and talented lady is represented quite young seated beneath a vine with the rich glow

of sunlight in the shade. She is dressed in white and wears a crimson scarf entwined about her and holds a book in her right hand. Her beautiful flaxen hair hangs in dainty ringlets. Altogether this work reveals the greatest elegance and refinement, and would seem to be in emulation of Sir Joshua Reynolds. This work too was discovered in a very neglected condition and almost black. The small painting representing the "Enfant Jesu" contemplating the cross with the emblems of Death and Time is a fine work by Albano. This work is owned by Monsignor Laflamme.

A painting by a master whose works are seldom seen on this continent is a fine work of the Deluge and painted on panel. It is by Paul Bril, who was commissioned to paint the great painting for His Holiness Pope Clement VIII. in the Clementina Chapel. This latter work is 72 feet wide and considered one of the world's masterpieces.

One of the most remarkable discoveries made at Laval is both of great historic and artistic interest inasmuch as it is the original portrait, life size, of the celebrated Cardinal Prince Theodore Trivultius. He was an Italian statesman and warrior of great distinction. Becoming a widower he entered holy orders and was Legate of the marches, and Cardinal in 1629. Then he was successively Viceroy of the Kingdom of Aragon (1643), of Sicily (1647), and of Sardinia (1648). He is represented standing beneath the portico of a classical building. He wears a red surcoat, over his doublet, and a

red military hat, and carries a marshal's bâton in his right hand. He wears very long dark luxuriant hair with moustache and an imperial. In the background a mounted soldier is seen galloping in the distance where the signs of war are indicated. The strong effect of the chiaroscuro together with the determined expression produce a highly dramatic effect. Notwithstanding the deep shadows which prevail, the whole work is luminous and the flesh painting contains the vital characteristics peculiar to Velasquez as well as the wonderful masterly breadth and impasto. The work is inscribed on upper left-hand corner: THEO CARD. PRINC. S TRIWLTIVS ARAGONL. PRO REX. CAPITANEVS GENERALIS, &c. 1648, which inscription is absolutely original and painted at the same time as the picture, thus showing it to have been executed in his 47th year—the year of his appointment as Viceroy of Aragon. The celebrated Spanish painter, Valesques (Don Diego de Silva), the painter of the above described portrait, was born at Seville in 1599. He was educated for a learned profession, but his love of art prevailed and he was placed with Francisco Herrera, the elder, to study painting. He became court painter to Philip IV., who presented him with a studio in the royal palace. He painted many important portraits of the great dignitaries of his period. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the very great value of this picture owned by Laval niversity. Genuine Velasquez are to-day priceless.

